

If I be daungerous, God yewe me sorwe;
Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,
Whan that hym list com forth and paye his dette.
An housbonde I wol have, I nyl nat lette,
Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his flessch, whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power duryng al my lyf
Upon his propre body, and noght he,
Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,
And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel;
At this sentence me liketh every deel.

WO stirte the Pardoner, and that anon;
Now, dame, quod he, by God and by
Seint John,
Ye been a noble prechour in this cas!
I was aboute to wedde a wyf; alas!
What, sholde I bye it on my flessch so
deere?

Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf toyeere!

BYDE, quod she, my tale is nat bigonne.

Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne.

Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.

And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale

Of tribulacioun in mariage,

Of which I am expert in al myn age,

This to seyn, myself have been the whippe;

Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe

Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche.

Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;

for I shal tell ensamples mo than ten.

Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,

By hym shul othere men corrected be.

The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;

Rede it in his Almageste, and take it there.

Dame, I wolde pray yow, if youre wyl it were,

Seyde this Pardoner, as ye bigan

Telle forth youre tale; spareth for no man,

And teche us yonge men of youre praktike.

Gladly, quod she, sith it may yow like;

But yet I praye to al this compaignye,

If that I speke after my fantasye,

As taketh not agrief of that I seye;

for myn entente nis but for to pleye.

WO sires, now wol I telle forth my

ale.

As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,

I shal seye sooth, tho housbondes

that I hadde,

As thre of hem were goode, and two

were badde.

The thre were goode men and riche, and olde;

Annethe myghte they the statut holde

In which that they were bounden unto me;

Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee!

As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke

How pitously anyght I made hem swynke!

And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.

They had me yeven hir gold and hir tresoor;

Me neded nat do lenger diligence

To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence;

They loved me so wel, by God above,

That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!

A wys womman wol sette hire evere in oon
To gete hire love, theras she hath noon;
But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,
And sith they hadde me yeven all hir lond,
What sholde I taken heede hem for to plesse,
But it were for my profit and myn ese?
I sette hem so a werke, by my fey,
That many a nyght they songen Weilawey!
The bacoun was nat fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
To bryng me gaye thynges fro the fayre;
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,
for, God it woot, I chidde hem spytously.

WO herkneth how I baar me proprely,

Ye wise wywes, that kan understonde.

Thus shul ye speke, and bere hem wrong

on honde;

for half so boldely kan ther no man

Swere and lye as a woman kan.

I sey nat this by wywes that been wyse,

But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.

A wys wyf shal, if that she kan hir good,

Bere hym on honde that the cow is wood,

And take witnesse of hir owene mayde

Of hir assent; but herkneth how I sayde.

Sire, olde kaynard, is this thyn array?

Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?

She is honoured over al ther she gooth;

I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty clooth.

What dostow at my neighebores hous?

Is she so fair? artow so amorous?

What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite!

Sire olde lechour, lat thy japes be!

And if I have a gossib or a freend,

Withouthen gilt, thou chidest as a feend

If that I walke or pleye unto his hous.

Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,

And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef:

Thou seist to me, it is a greet meschief

To wedde a povre womman, for costage;

And if that she be riche, of heigh parage,

Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie

To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie;

And if that she be faire, thou verray knave,

Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have;

She may no while in chastitee abyde

That is assailed upon ech a syde.

WO seyst som folk desire us for richesse,

Somme for oure shap, and somme for oure

fairnesse,

And som, for she kan outhere synge or daunce,

And som, for gentillesse and daliaunce;

Som, for hir handes and hir armes smale;

Thus goth al to the devel by thy tale!

Thou seyst, men may nat kepe a castel wal;

It may so longe assailed been over al.

And if that she be foul, thou seist that she

Coveiteth every man that she may se;

for as a spaynel she wol on hym lepe,

Til that she fynde som man hire to chepe;

Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake,

As, seistow, that wol been withoute make.
And seyst, it is an hard thyng for to welde
A thyng that no man wole, his thanks, helde.
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou goost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendeth unto hevене.
With wilde thonder, dynt and firy levēne
Moote thy welked nekke be to broke!
Thou seyst that droppyn houses, and eek

smoke,

And chiding wywes, maken men to flee

Out of hir owene house; al benedicitee!

What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?

Thou seyst we wywes wol our vices hide

Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe;

Al may that be a proverbe of a shrewe.

Thou seist, that oren, asses, hors, and houndes,

They been assayed at diverse stoundes;

But folk of wywes maken noon assay

Til they be wedded; olde dotard shrewe!

And thanne, seistow, we wol our vices shewe.

Thou seist also, that it displeth me

But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,

And but thou poure alwey upon my face,

And clepe me, faire dame, in every place;

And but thou make a feeste on thilke day

That I was born, and make me fressh and gay;

And but thou do to my norice honour,

And to my chamberere withinne my bour,

And to my fadres folk and his allies;

Thus seistow, olde bareful of lyes!

WO yet of oure apprentice Janekyn,

For his crisp heer, shynynge as gold so fyn,

And for he squiereth me bothe up and down,

Yet hastow caught a fals suspecion;

I wol hym noght, though thou were deed to-morwe!

But tel me this, why hydestow, with sorwe,

The keyes of thy cheste away fro me?

It is my good, as wel as thyn, pardee!

What! wenestow make an ydiot of oure dame?

Now, by that lord that called is Seint Jame,

Thou shalt nat bothe, though that thou were wood,

Bemaister of my body and of my good;

That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thynne eyen!

What nedeth thee of me tenquere or spyen?

I trowe, thou woldest loke me in thy chiste!

Thou sholdest seye: Wyf, go wher thee liste;

Taak youre disport, I wol not leve no talys;

I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Hlys.

We love no man that taketh kepe or charge

Wher that we goon; we wol ben at oure large.

WO alle men yblessed moot he be,

The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,

That seith this proverbe in his Almageste,

Of alle men his wysdom is hyste

That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde.

By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,

Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care

How myrily that othere folkes fare?

for certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,

Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.

He is to greet a nygard that wol werne

A man to lighte his candle at his lanterne;

He shal have never the lasse light, pardee!

Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.

WO seyst also, that if we make us gay

With clothing, and with precious array,

That it is peril of oure chastitee;

And yet, with sorwe, thou most enforce thee,

And seye thise wordes in tha postles name:

In habit maad with chastitee and shame

Ye wommen shul apparaille yow, quod he,

And noght in tressed heer, and gay perree,

As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.

After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,

I wol nat wirche as muchel as a gnat.

Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;

for whoso wolde senge a cates skyn,

Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in;

And if the cates skyn be slyk and gay,

She wol nat dwelle in house half a day;

But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,

To shewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwawed;

This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,

I wol renne out, my borel for to shewe.

SIRE olde fool, what eyleth thee to spyen?

Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred

eyen

To be my wardecors, as he kan best,

In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;

Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!

Thou seydest eek, that ther been thynges thre,

The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,

And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe.

O leve sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lyf!

Yet prechestow, and seyst, an hateful wyf

Yrekened is for oon of thise meschances.

Been ther none othere maner resemblances

That ye may likne youre parables to,

But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?

Thou liknest eek wommanes love to helle,

To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle;

Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr,

The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir

To consume every thyng that brent wole be;

Thou seyst, that right as wormes shende a tree,

Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;

This knowe they that been to wywes bonde.

WORDYNGES, right thus as ye have un-

derstonde,

Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on

honde,

That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;

And al was fals, but that I took witnesse

On Janekyn, and on my nece also.

O Lord, the peyne I dide hem and the wo!

ful gilteles, by Goddes sweete pyne!

for as an hors I koude byte and whyne;

I koude pleyne, thogh I were in the gilt,

Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.

Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;

I pleynd first, so was oure werre ystynt;

They were ful glad to excusen hem ful blyve